



## The Power of Your Words

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**H**ow often have you heard statements such as, "He's a bad apple," "She'll never amount to much," "He's just a chip off the old block," "He acts like the devil." Maybe you've heard, "These children are so undisciplined, they'll never amount to anything," "Junior high schoolers are all mixed up," or "When they get to be teenagers, you can expect them to rebel."

For those of us who work with young people, the answer is, "We've heard these types of words more often than we can count." I overheard a teacher say, "It will take a miracle to turn this class around." This may very well be the case, especially since this is what the teacher believes. It is the hour for Christian parents and educators to focus on the power of the words they are speaking over their children and students.

### Speaking and Believing Are Important

Educational research is full of examples that clearly show that what teachers say and believe about students play a significant role in how students feel about themselves, their level of academic success and how well they behave. In essence, the words that students speak about themselves and the words spoken about them become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Educators use the term "self-fulfilling prophecy," first coined by sociologist Robert Merton in 1968, to portray how beliefs about people and situations sometimes create their own fulfillment. Later, Rosenthal and Jacobson in 1968 published the "Pygmalion" study, showing how teachers' belief in academic performance resulted in greater IQ performance. Research over the years continues to support a significant relationship between the words teachers speak over their students and academic and behavioral success.

Counseling psychologists tell us that words and phrases that are constantly repeated help to induce attitudes and they become a force that perpetuates behavior. As a result, children become the products of words spoken in the home, school and church.

### Classroom and Home Conditions Are the Product of Words

Words spoken at home and in the classroom are very important. The atmosphere, behavior and performance of a classroom are the result of the words spoken by the teacher. The same is true about the words spoken by parents at home. Words, when spoken and believed, can hold a parent/teacher and his children/students captive. Words such as, "This class is nothing but a bunch of deadbeats," "You will never amount to anything worthwhile," or "There is no use trying, you're just

stupid," when spoken and believed, will produce a negative result. Students who hear these words coming from teachers and parents will begin to think and believe that teachers and parents are out to destroy them, that the school and the home are a place of defeat, failure and humiliation, a place organized to convince him that he's no good. When this happens, students will find ways to rebel, disrupt and seek revenge.

When Johnny and Susie are repeatedly told that they are dumb and clumsy, they will likely come to believe it. Disapproval then takes on the force of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Many teachers will come right out and tell a child, "You are dumb." Likewise, the teacher may put the child down for wrong answers. Such as, "You should have learned that in the third grade." Although the teacher did not say, "You are dumb," the result is the same. The continued focus by parents and teachers on lack of success and the frequent use of negative words destroys the desire of children and students to achieve and promotes misconduct.

Parents and teachers who believe that home and school are places where students need to experience success will find ways to provide this success. When the home and classroom become places where the student obtains victory, success and dignity, students will find ways to be a blessing, to walk in obedience and to serve others

### Self-Esteem Is a Product of Words

Sometimes parents and educators in an attempt to exercise their authority resort to attacking student self-esteem through yelling, sarcasm, put-downs, embarrassment, belittling their character and ignoring their accomplishments. These methods only

exasperate students and provoke them to anger, bitterness, or resentment. A child's self-esteem may eventually reveal itself through lower motivation to achieve, underachievement and discipline problems.

When students hear someone speaking negatively about them, it can change their whole day, their attitude and eventually their behavior. Spoken and written words get inside a person's spirit and take root. Students then begin to think and act on what is inside them.

One day Peter, a fifth grader, was referred to the elementary principal. This was the first time Peter had been sent to the office for disobedience. The principal was just about to lecture Peter on the topic of disobedience when she felt quickened in her spirit to share with Peter the idea that he was a person of value and that God had a very special purpose for him. She prayed with Peter to become an obedient man of God and then sent him back to the classroom.

The very next day during a time when the teacher was asking for some help with several classroom tasks, Peter went to the teacher and told her that he felt God wanted him to take care of the chalkboard erasers. He even asked if he could wear his chalkboard eraser duty badge home. He wore his badge home every day that week. From that time on, Peter never received another referral.

### Speak the Word of God over Your Children

Research on the effect of words spoken into the lives of children supports what the Word of God says about the power of words. For example, Proverbs 18:21 warns, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Jesus said, "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:37.)

It stands to reason from a natural sense that if words spoken over and to children by parents, teachers and significant persons in the life of children (grandparents, pastors, neighbors, friends) induce attitudes, shape behavior, and set the stage for success or failure, then words spoken from the Word of God will have an even greater effect. Isaiah 55:11 says, "So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it will not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it."

When the Word of God is spoken over your children and over the lives of your students, those words will be fulfilled. His word will come to pass as it is produced and believed by your heart, and released out of your mouth. There is power in the spoken Word of God. Speak it over your children and students!

**IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE THE CHANGE TO VICTORY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL** where the Word of God is spoken over your children. 7700 South Lewis Avenue, Tulsa, OK 74136, 918-491-7720 or visit us on-line at [www.vcstulsa.org](http://www.vcstulsa.org) For more information on this topic, see Spirit-Directed Discipline: Helping Johnny and Susie to Behave. ☺

**"Words and phrases that are constantly repeated help foster success or failure."**